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from the Cross.



E. B. JACKSON.







**The Words Spoken by our Lord  
From the Cross.**



**Short Sermons**  
ON  
**The Words Spoken by our Lord**  
**FROM THE CROSS.**

*Preached during Lent, 1879, in All Saints' Church,  
Wold Newton.*

BY THE  
**REV. C. B. JACKSON, A.M.,**  
*Rector of Wold Newton.*



**London :**  
**W SKEFFINGTON & SON, 163, PICCADILLY.**

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1881

100. c c. 174





THE following Sermons, or Sermonettes, were written, without thought at the time of their being published, for a week-night congregation, of whom the larger portion were servants and labourers, in a very small village, and were also read to one or two sick and aged people not able to get to Church. Believing that they were appreciated by the flock for whom they were prepared, it has occurred to their Author that they might be of further use if read at Family Prayers some evening during Lent, where the members of the household had not the opportunity of attending special Lenten Services at Church ; or if read or lent to sick people to read. In this hope they are sent out with a prayer that whatever in them is not in accordance with God's Word may be forgotten, and that whatever in them is agreeable to the same may be blessed to all who read or hear them.

*Wold Newton Rectory,*

November, 1880.



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## SERMON I

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### The Seven Last Words.

---

ST. LUKE XXIII. 34.

*"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."*

It cannot fail, I think, to deepen in us, my brethren, our reverent love for our Saviour, and our appreciation of all which He endured for us and for our salvation, if we will, at least on one evening during these weeks of Lent, take our stand as it were beneath His Cross, and listen to the words which fell from His sacred lips, as He endured so much grief, suffering wrongfully. We all know how we dwell upon the last words of friends whom we have loved; how we recall them again and again, and what an influence oftentimes they have upon our lives, restraining us from doing what, had they been still with us, would have given them pain, and

encouraging us to persevere in every good word and work. But, if such be the effect of words spoken by earthly friends, how much more may the dying words of Him, of Whom it was said, "never man spake like this man," have a lasting effect upon our lives, if we will only open our ears attentively to hear them ! Let us, then, listen to them as though we heard them spoken to us from the Cross. Seven times did He thus give utterance to the thoughts which occupied His soul : " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." " Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." " Woman, behold thy Son," and to the disciple, " Behold thy mother." " My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" " I thirst." " It is finished." " Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

Before we go further, it may be well to call to mind that our Lord, while He was God, was no less truly man, and so had our feelings ; and then to think how the night and morning had been passed before Calvary was reached. Our criminals, it is said, on the night before their execution, commonly sleep well, and so for a time forget their

trouble ; no such mitigation of sorrow was granted to our Lord. After His last supper with His disciples and His parting counsels to them, He went, as He was wont, to the garden of Gethsemane, and there said to the three, whose privilege it was to be nearest to Him, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, "even unto death." Then followed that bitter agony which caused Him to break out in a sweat of blood : then followed the betrayal and the desertion of His disciples : then was He taken before Caiaphas and the Jewish Sanhedrim, rudely questioned, spit upon, and buffeted. Thence was He sent to Pilate, by him again questioned and passed on to Herod. By Herod and his soldiers He was set at nought, mocked, and arrayed in a gorgeous robe, and so led back to Pilate. Pilate, finding that he could prevail nothing with the chief priests, who were urging on the multitude to clamour for His death, having first scourged Him, at last surrendered Him to be crucified. From the judgment hall He goes forth to the place of execution bearing His Cross, until He sinks down exhausted, and Simon, of Cyrene, is compelled to relieve Him of



His burden. Arrived at Golgotha He is stretched upon the Cross, the nails having been driven into His Hands and into His Feet, the Cross is reared and made secure in the place prepared for it, and then He is exhibited as though He had been a malefactor expiating an evil life by a death of shame. Then it was that He lifted up His voice and cried, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Never before had sufferer uttered such a prayer. When His enemies had now done their worst, heaped upon Him every insult, and consigned Him to a death of lingering torture, then it was that He returned them good for evil, made excuses for them, and asked His Father to forgive them. Never before had anything like it been known, except so far as He had Himself taught His disciples, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Having given them such a charge, He was now Himself fulfilling it in very deed.

We may regard the words He thus uttered, first, as a record of what was in the mind of Christ our

Lord, when men were doing their utmost to use Him despitefully : and next, as an example for our imitation.

But now, who were they for whom the Saviour asked forgiveness of His Father ? First of all, there were the Roman soldiers, who were His actual executioners. They, being ignorant heathens, might look upon our Lord as upon any other criminal given over to them for execution, after receiving sentence from the Roman Governor. They were doing no more than, as they conceived to be, their duty ; they would have been guilty of insubordination, and as such themselves liable to severe punishment, had they hesitated to do as they were bidden. It was, then, literally true of them, they knew not what they did. Was the prayer, then, limited to them ? Not so. Not only did our Lord pray for His executioners, but for them also who had set them on, inasmuch as they too knew not what they did. So we learn from St. Paul, at Antioch, in Pisidia : "For they," he says, "that dwell at Jerusalem and their rulers, because they knew Him  
"not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are

“read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them  
“in condemning Him. And though they found no  
“cause of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate  
“that He should be slain.” Their sin was great in  
allowing their bad passions to goad an innocent  
man to death ; but they knew not the awful nature  
of the crime they were committing ; had they under-  
stood indeed that the object of their envy was none  
other than the Son of God, they had not dared to  
have raised their hand against Him ; they were then  
blinded, and so were of the number for whom the  
Great High Priest made intercession, and so had  
forty years given them for repentance. But are we  
to limit the operation of that grandest and noblest  
act of intercession to the priests and people who  
so madly clamoured for His death ? No doubt it  
was their violence which compelled Pilate against  
his will to give Him up, in Whom he could find no  
fault ; but we must look further yet if we would  
discover all who had a hand in putting the Holy  
One to death. We must go to the Prophet Isaiah  
to learn who besides the people of Jerusalem and  
their rulers were comprehended in the terms of our

Lord's petition. It was not of his own nation only, but of all generations, ourselves among the number, that he wrote, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Whether we have realised it or not, our hand was raised up against the Holy One and the just, inasmuch as our sins helped to make up the load which was laid upon Him. You and I, then, my brethren, are of the number for whom our Lord prayed when He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And for us, in a certain sense, there is even less excuse than for the Roman soldiers and the Jews, inasmuch as we have known far more than they did against Whom we have sinned, and we have had the Holy Spirit to help us to overcome the sin by which, alas! we are still so easily beset. And yet no doubt the plea, which the Saviour urged, He made for us who oftentimes have sinned in ignorance, not know-

ing better, and yet more frequently from thoughtlessness, not realising what we do. When we hear then, the words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," what better can we desire than that that prayer may be accepted of the Father for us, and that so our sins of ignorance and thoughtlessness may be forgiven. "In many things we offend all." Who is there that will not sorrowfully admit this to be true? Who is there that can say "I have made my heart clean," "I have kept the door of my lips, that they should not speak vanity," "There is no unrighteousness in me?" Then may we all say, "If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss; O Lord, who may abide it?" And then hearkening to the words which fell from Him Who is one with the Father, thankfully exclaim, "There is mercy with Thee: therefore shalt Thou be feared." What comfort is there, not only for ourselves, in the hope that we were included in the number for whom our Saviour made His petition, but when we think of millions who never heard His Name, and of others yet nearer to us, whose sins we may trust He has re-

garded as sins of ignorance, rather than of obstinate  
\* opposition to His Will ! Only at the last day shall  
we know how far-reaching and comprehensive was  
the prayer, " Father, forgive them, for they know  
" not what they do."

Our Lord, however, not only came to be our  
great High Priest and Intercessor, He came also to  
leave us an example, that we might walk in the steps  
of His most holy life. What a lesson, then, have  
we to learn from that wonderful prayer that went up  
from the Cross ! Who can bear malice, hatred,  
unforgiveness in his heart, who listens to those  
words of love, which proceeded forth from the lips of  
the Son of God, suffering in His human nature all that  
the malice of His enemies could devise against Him !

The Holy One and the just, Who had done no  
wrong, and Whose lips had spoken no guile, Who had  
gone about doing good to men's souls and bodies,  
was being cruelly tortured, and yet no angry word  
escapes Him ; nay more, as Isaiah had foretold,  
" He made intercession for the transgressors." What  
unkindness, then, can we receive which can justify  
us in letting the sun go down upon our wrath, or in

cherishing bitter feelings towards any who we may fancy have done us wrong, when we call to mind how He Who said, "Love ye your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you," fulfilled to the letter His own injunction? What He said of all who had a hand in putting Him to death is no less true, at least many times, of those who seem to do us wrong, "they know not what they do." How oftentimes is offence taken, where no offence was meant! How often do we put a wrong construction upon words spoken innocently, and how often make mistakes in ascribing motives for things done by our neighbours of which they were never conscious! But let their offences be what they may, let them be as deliberate and wilful, as too often we think them when they are no such thing, how can any of us dare to nourish vindictive feelings in our hearts, when we call to mind the words, which our Lord has put into our mouths, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," wherein we ask God to do by us as we are doing by those who

wound us to the quick? When any one says the Lord's prayer while cherishing resentment, what do they but invite a curse, rather than a blessing, when they ask Him to treat them as they do their neighbours? It may be said indeed, "But are you not demanding more than flesh and blood is equal to, when you urge the duty of forgiveness?" This is no doubt true; but then, we make an appeal, not to mere flesh and blood, but, as St. Paul says to the Corinthians, to those whom he thus addresses, "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Can anything then be too hard for the members of Christ, in whose bodies the Holy Spirit dwells as in a Temple? That it is not impossible for Christians, if they will, so to tread in the footsteps of their Master, we have proof positive; for what said St. Stephen while he was being stoned to death: "He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge;" and so, in answer as it might seem to his prayer, one who was consenting to his death, became the most zealous propagator of the faith which then he persecuted.



Before, then, we leave the Church to-night, we shall all of us do well upon our knees to say, "Father, grant that all the sins, which in my ignorance I have sinned against Thee, may be forgiven, "for the sake of Him Who on the Cross made "intercession for sinners, and help me by Thy "Spirit evermore to forgive, even as I hope to be "forgiven of Thee." So, brethren, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and "evil speaking be put away from us, with all malice," and may we never forget the Apostle's exhortation, "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, "hath forgiven you."

## SERMON II.

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### The Seven Last Words.

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ST. LUKE XXIII. 43.

*"Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."*

EXPOSURE has almost always a bad effect upon criminals. Happily of late years a great change has been made in their treatment in this country ; whereas, formerly, you might often see them chained together on their way to prison, they are now in our great towns taken in covered carriages, and so spared the humiliation of being seen in their degradation. Aforetime, as they could not hide their shame, they tried to brazen it out, and behaved as though they were utterly callous to their condition. I shall never forget the effect produced upon a young woman, one of such a gang, when a humane

officer in charge of them at a wayside station, on a bitter cold day, undid the chain by which she was coupled to the rest, and took her inside and placed her by the fire; having before been as rude and noisy as her male companions, in an instant she became silent and conducted herself as if she felt her position. And so, too, now, when unhappy men or women, who have been condemned, are executed, they are no longer exposed to the gaze of an excited multitude, but the dread sentence of the law is carried out in the presence of a few, whose painful duty it is to see to its sad fulfilment. Whereas in times past the minds of such unhappy persons were apt to be distracted by all sorts of sights and sounds when they were brought out upon the gallows, now there is nothing to take off their attention from the awfulness of their position, and so realising the fact that in a few short moments their soul must appear before Him "unto Whom all hearts "be open and from Whom no secrets are hid."

Such, however, was not the custom in Judæa, when our Lord was led forth for crucifixion. By way of heaping upon Him further insult and

reproach, two thieves were brought out to suffer with Him, "on either side one and Jesus in the "midst." At times, men who have received a good education, and have occupied what is called a better position, unhappily give way to temptation, commit crime, and so find themselves obliged to take their place side by side with other criminals. Little sympathy do such men receive from their fellow-prisoners; on the contrary their companions seem to find some sort of malicious satisfaction in jeering them, and reminding them of their former condition. Just so was it when the two malefactors were brought forth to expiate their crimes side by side with Jesus of Nazareth. True to what has been said of the public exposure of criminals, they shewed the worst side of their characters, and at once perceiving that He, Who was to suffer with them, was not one of their own class, joined in reviling Him, casting in His teeth the good deeds He had done before, "He "saved others, Himself He cannot save." St. Matthew and St. Mark record the fact that the two thieves both so conducted themselves at the first. What a contrast does the Holy One and the just

present to them ! In Him there was no consciousness of guilt, and therefore neither the feeling of shame nor yet the effort to cloak it under a pretence of indifference. From first to last He was surrounded by a halo of innocence. When His enemies met with Him in the garden, instead of quaking before them, as one who would escape from justice, He calmly said, "Whom seek ye ? They answered "Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, "I am He. As soon then as He had said unto "them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to "the ground." A modern artist in his picture of our Lord at a later stage, as He is being brought forth from the Hall of Judgment, has succeeded in giving such an expression of dignity to the sufferer as few could see without being deeply impressed ; but if his conception of the scene is so calculated to move the beholder, what must it have been to have looked on Him in reality Who so meekly "bore our griefs and carried our sorrows !" "When "He was reviled, He reviled not again." For awhile no word escaped Him : in silence He submitted to His executioners, fulfilling the prediction,

“He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth ; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.” When however the malice of His enemies had triumphed, as it seemed, and the sinless One had been lifted up, and all who passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and the two thieves also which were crucified with Him sided with the multitude, then did He open His lips not to curse but to bless all who so despitely used Him, saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” What a word was that to be uttered by One Who was suffering wrongfully ! He Who could so speak must needs be more than He seemed. Coupling those words with what He had aforetime heard of Jesus of Nazareth, one of the malefactors could no longer join in the mockery of the Holy One. What else but Divine could He be Who could so act and speak ! Hearing those words of more than human tenderness and pity the malefactor was brought to a better mind. Possibly he might have been better taught in his youth, or he might have then recalled

what he had heard or seen of the Prophet of Nazareth before ; it may be that the prayers of a mother, who had grieved over her misguided son, at that time were being answered ; any way, the words. "Father, forgive them, for they know not "what they do," had an effect upon him that no amount of mere suffering could have produced. Sobered in a moment, and brought to a sense of his own condition, immediately he rebukes his partner in guilt, saying, "Dost not thou fear God, "seeing that thou art in the same condemnation, "and we indeed justly ; for we receive the due "reward of our deeds : but this man hath done nothing amiss." Thus did he condemn himself, admitting the justice of the sentence which he had received ; but this was not all : then, while all around him were still blasphemously insulting Him whom they regarded as a mere man, he turned to the sufferer near him, and owned Him as Lord of all—"Lord," he says, "remember me when Thou "comest into Thy kingdom." In this malefactor, then, we find such a combination of repentance and faith as nowhere perhaps was ever equalled. There.

have been men, no doubt, who had sinned as much or more than he had done, who yet have offered unto God a broken and a contrite heart ; there have been others who have turned and bowed themselves down before their Saviour in the same implicit faith that all power in Heaven and in earth has been given into His hands ; but never before or since did penitent own his faults while surrounded by such a host of hardened fellow-sinners, or own his Lord while all else beside could "see no beauty in Him "that they should desire Him." \* But now what notice does so signal a confession meet with ? When we are in anguish, however it may be occasioned, it is hard for us to attend to anything but the pain which we are enduring. Was it so, then, with our Lord as He hung upon the Cross ? His ears had never before been closed to a cry for help ; neither were they then. He appreciates the thief's repent-

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\* "The thief hanging on the Cross with the Lord," says St. Augustine, "believed in Christ when the disciples doubted "of Him. The Jews despised Him Who awakeneth the dead "out of sleep, the thief did not despise Him Who side by side "with himself was hanging on a cross." See WORDSWORTH ON ST. LUKE XXIII. 42, 43.



ance, and accepts the tribute of his faith, saying, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." And so, while expiating our sins upon the Cross, He rescues a soul from the power of the devil, the first-fruits of the host that since have fled to Him for refuge. It had been foretold of our Lord, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied;" and so in that hour He hailed the conversion of the thief as the pledge and foretaste of the joy which is His continually, when ever sinners turn to Him in penitence and faith. But now what was it that the Saviour promised? Was it, as so many vainly imagine when their friends are dying, that their souls will go immediately to Heaven, forgetting that the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment must first take place before they can receive their full consummation and bliss. No, not even did the human soul of our Lord Himself at once go up to Heaven when it quitted His Body. After His Resurrection He could say, "I am not yet ascended to My Father : but go to My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God."

Then what is Paradise? Paradise is properly a Persian word, which is used to describe the park or garden through which we have to pass to some great man's mansion, beautiful in itself, but not the very presence chamber in which he receives his guests.\* "Blessed," we are told, "are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours." Welcome, however, as rest is to the weary, it is not all that we would desire: rather would we rise from our beds, when daylight returns, and with renewed vigour resume our active occupations. During, then, that short interval, when our Lord's own Body and Soul were separated, He went not up to Heaven, but was received into that abode where Abraham with all the faithful await their full reward: thither at their death do angels convey the souls of all who themselves have made their peace with God, or for whom in their hour of need the "effectual fervent prayer" of the righteous has been heard, there, as we may well believe, to

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\* See Bishop Wordsworth's Greek Testament.

grow in meetness for the Beatific vision which awaits them, while brought into closer fellowship with their Lord and "the spirits of just men made perfect." Such would seem to be implied in what we read of what was done in answer to the cry of the souls beneath the altar, "white robes were given unto every one of them ; and it was said unto them that they should rest for a little season until their fellow-servants and their brethren should be fulfilled." "There remaineth then a rest for the people of God," an interval of waiting between the time of their quitting their bodies and their admission in body and soul to the fulness of joy at God's Right Hand, during which they grow in meetness, to receive those good things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. This then was the happiness which awaited the penitent thief as soon as death should end his sufferings. "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." "There shalt thou be with Me released from pain, and there shalt thou receive the robe of righteousness which shall effectually cover thy nakedness." But now let us briefly sum up the lessons which we may

learn from this evening's meditation. And, first of all, what is it which will bring sinners to repentance? Is it any unnecessary exposure of or upbraiding them with their guilt? That will but harden them. No continual taunting sinners with their sins can do them good. The clergy, magistrates, and judges, to whom such authority has been committed, have no doubt at times a painful duty to fulfil, to shew people their sins, or subject offenders against the law to correction; but for others to point at them with the finger of scorn can only make them worse by arousing in them feelings of bitterness and resentment. While, then, the two thieves in the presence of the assembled multitude exhibited the worst side of their nature, taking part with the rest in taunting their fellow-sufferer, "the Holy One" "and the Just" will not add to their misery by reminding them that they do but receive the due reward of their deeds, but sets them an example of silent endurance, while Himself suffering wrongfully. He only breathes the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Would we, then, win any from the error of their

ways, we must not say to them in effect, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou." Such a thought must never enter our minds if we would seek to do them good: only in the spirit of pity, such as moved our Lord to pray His Father to forgive His executioners, can we hope to win any who have fallen; and only they who are themselves pure have such compassion for the fallen. "The angels rejoice over every sinner that repenteth:" the nearer then anyone approaches their condition, the better will they be fitted to recover sinners from the error of their ways. There are, however, some natures so hardened that not even compassion shewn them by the innocent can soften them. One who was crucified with his Lord, and heard His prayer, yet continued railing, and so far as we know, proved himself impenitent to the last. Again, we learn from what we have heard to-night how we may obtain solace if ourselves suffering: our Lord found it in ministering to one who was suffering by His side. In your sickness or distress see if there is no one near you to whom you may send help, if you cannot yourself visit

them, and as you mete to them so shall it be measured to you again. Last of all, remember the promise made to the penitent thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." There, too, may we hope to be, if, like him, we will acknowledge our faults, and not be ashamed to confess Christ before men, and ask Him to own us in His kingdom: there, when we have done with earth, may we hope to be set free from all the stains which we have contracted in this sinful world, waiting for the redemption of our bodies, until the day when Christ shall say. "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

## SERMON III.

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### The Seven Last Words.

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S. JOHN XIX. 26, 27.

*"When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His Mother, Woman behold thy son ! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother ! and from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."*

So far, my brethren, in our meditations on these Thursday evenings, we have seen our Lord, while Himself suffering in mind and body, more thoughtful for others than taken up with the pains which He was Himself enduring. But now we are carried a step further. Not only do we see our Lord while suffering "the just for the unjust," making intercession for all mankind, and stooping to hear and answer the petition of one whose sins had brought upon him deserved chastisement ; but retaining to the end those personal attachments which, like any

other man, He had formed to those whom He loved. As St. John says, "having loved His own "which were in the world, He loved them unto the "end." While He hated no man, there were some especially near and dear to Him. As a Son He could not forget the mother who had borne Him and brought Him up, or be indifferent when He saw her passing through the deep waters of trouble, as she gazed on the Son of her womb, innocent of crime, yet put to a death of shame. There, too, by His side, while all others had forsaken Him, stood the friend whom He loved. In His next words, then, our Lord consecrates for ever the love which children owe to their parents, and the tender regard which every true man or woman cherishes for a chosen friend. "When Jesus therefore saw His "mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He "loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold "thy son ! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold "thy mother ! and from that hour that disciple took "her unto his own home." But now, some might ask, why, if He loved her, did He not address her by her proper title of mother ? He said "Woman,



"behold thy son!" How then was this? In the first place, the word here translated "woman," in the original language implies no disrespect, as sometimes unhappily it does when not qualified by some other word in our language. No, it was the word made use of by persons even when addressing a queen. Still we cannot but admit that there was a studied reserve in it, as employed by our Lord on this occasion. Why, then, was this? We need not go far for an explanation. Only one of His two natures had He derived from the Virgin Mary. There had been times before when He had gently yet firmly shewed that, while He would render to her all loving filial obedience in the one nature, she had no authority over Him in the other. When after three days she had found Him at twelve years of age, in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions, and said unto Him, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." He replied, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business!" And so again when at Cana of Galilee, she said

unto Him, "They have no wine," intimating that He might supply it, He said, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come," so giving her to understand that it must rest with Himself when and where and how He exercised those powers which He had not derived from her. And so again, when hearing that the multitude so beset Him, that He and His disciples "could not so much as eat bread," His friends "went out to lay hold on Him, for they said He is beside Himself:" no sooner was He told, "Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren without seek for Thee," than "He answered them saying, Who is My mother, or My brethren?" as much as to say, engaged as I am now in doing "the will of Him that sent Me," I can recognise no right that they have to interfere. "And He looked about on them which sat about Him and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! for whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother and My sister and mother." While doing His Father's will He would not allow even His mother to interpose. Being God, no less than man, He looked on to the

end of time, and saw the grievous errors into which so large a portion of His Church would fall in ascribing unto His mother the honour due unto Himself, and therefore by no word of His would He sanction such wrong done unto the Godhead. And so we find in the later Scriptures a like reserve with respect to the Virgin, after the ascension of our Lord. Most interesting would it have been to us to have known where and how she spent the remainder of her days, and where her body was laid after that her soul had gone to rest. But just as no man knoweth where Moses was buried, for the like reason, we may suppose, no man knoweth where the Virgin lies. God would not have any of that honour, which belongs to Him, rendered to the lifeless remains of those whom He has seen fit to employ as His instruments. In the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we find the Virgin mentioned as being in the upper room with the disciples, when they returned to Jerusalem, after witnessing their Lord's Ascension ; and then no more does her name appear in the pages of the Bible. Coupling this fact with the reserve practised by our Lord, what

other can we make of it than that both were by design, that men studying the Scriptures might know that however they call the Virgin "Blessed," she is not to be confused with the Son to Whom she gave birth. While, however, our Lord thus purposely shrank, as it would seem, from giving to her, as He was expiating our sins upon the Cross, the very name of mother, lest He might give any excuse for her being placed in the false position which some have given to her, addressing prayers to her which ought to have been addressed to Himself, He did not scruple to manifest His sense of the duty which He did owe to her, of tender sympathy and of providing for her comfort. It has always been a reverent opinion in the Church that the title of ever Virgin appertained to the mother of our Lord; that her husband was an old man when he took to him Mary his espoused wife, that she had no other child of her own, and that her husband was dead when she stood beside the Cross. Had it been otherwise there would have been no need to procure for her another home; she would have returned to her husband or her children if she had

had any ; manifestly she had no such resource ; and so He, Who was the pattern Son, secured for her the tender care which she required, by committing her to the charge of the friend whom He loved. “ When Jesus therefore saw His mother, “ and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, “ He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy “ son ! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy “ mother ! and from that hour that disciple took “ her unto his own home.” So did He, Who had indignantly rebuked His countrymen for their breach of the fifth commandment by calling anything Corban whereby they might have rendered help to their fathers or their mothers, Himself set the example of obedience to His Father’s commandment. However He exercised reserve in word, He did indeed fulfil a good Son’s part in ministering to His mother, and seeing that she should not want when He should be no longer upon earth. It might be said, however, but did He not rise again the third day, and tarry yet forty days upon earth, why then did He not wait for His final farewell, and then commit His mother to the care of St. John ? But

neither did she, nor yet St. John, at that time understand the Scriptures, or His own word, that so it should be ; He would not then leave her comfortless when she was losing Him, as she thought, for ever in this world. What tenderness was there, then, in His thus anticipating the sorrow that might almost have overwhelmed her, when she should see her Son's dead body taken down from the Cross and committed to the tomb ! What a world of loving thoughtfulness for her does this reveal, at the time when He was Himself enduring so much pain ! Who then shall esteem himself or herself excused, when they permit an aged parent to endure any sorrow which they can possibly ward off from them ? If our Lord, while Himself being cruelly tortured, could not allow the mother that bare Him to be subjected to grief, from which He could shield her, what will He think of sons and daughters who dishonour their parents, and have no feeling for them in the time of age or sickness ! In those few words addressed to her, "Woman, behold thy son," and to His disciple, "Behold thy mother," we see what should be every good child's part, when they

can do ought for the relief of father or mother. Let these words, then, come into your minds if ever you are tempted to forget what is due to those who nurtured you. He, who, as one with His Father, gave us the commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother," was Himself thus careful to fulfil it. But not only so: not only did He cherish the mother who bore Him, by securing to her a home when He was gone, but in that time of cruel suffering, He did not forget the friend "whom He loved." No greater honour could He have bestowed upon him, in no other way could He have shewn such confidence in him, as by committing to his charge one who had so much nearer claim to His regard. Does not this tell us that if we would be like Him, we too must be true to our friends, and honour them as best we may. Only let our most intimate friends have been chosen, because we have found in them qualities deserving our esteem, and then nothing can be too much whereby we may prove to them the sincerity of our love. St. John tells us, as I have already reminded you, that "when Jesus knew that He should depart

“out of this world unto the Father, having loved  
“His own which were in the world, He loved them  
“unto the end.” Shall we then suppose that He,  
Who in His own last hours maintained such tender  
feelings for those He loved, now that He has  
departed out of the world, has ceased to cherish  
them? Abraham was called “the Friend” of God ;  
long after that he had died we find the Almighty  
speaking of Himself as the God of Abraham, and  
our Lord referred to those words as a proof that  
Abraham was still in a condition to feel all that  
God had been and still was to him. Then may we  
be sure that our friendships and attachments, if  
they rest on a right foundation, will be perpetuated  
hereafter ; and so friends who have loved each other  
on earth will have their happiness increased and  
intensified, by sharing it with those who have gone  
before or shall follow them to that rest which awaits  
the righteous. A veil has been drawn over the  
privacy of that hallowed home in which the disciple  
whom Jesus loved, cherished, in her declining years,  
the mother of our Lord. Yet who can doubt that  
the intercourse, which they had in their common



bereavement, drew them together in a way which prepared them to help each others joy in the Paradise where they are now, and that it shall yet further deepen it, when together they shall enter upon that bliss which awaits them in Heaven, after that the grave has restored to them their bodies !

And now I have just one other thing to say. You remember the remark made last week respecting the kind of solace which our Lord allowed Himself in His sorrow, viz., the hearing and answering the prayer of His fellow-sufferer. Too often, as I said, when we are suffering, we can think only of ourselves, and so our thoughts get so concentrated on ourselves that we forget what is due to others around us, and so we forfeit the sympathy which we might otherwise meet with, because of the unamiable temper which we display. What is it which makes these words from the Cross, which so far we have been considering, so touching ? What but the forgetfulness by Him, Who uttered them, of His own griefs, in His tender regard for all around Him ! May we, then, so ponder them, that, like Him, whensoever we may be afflicted, we too may find

consolation, and an antidote to the danger to which we are then exposed, in seeking to do what little good we can to others, who in God's good providence are placed within our reach ! So ministering to others, we shall not ourselves lack consolation.

## SERMON IV.

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### The Seven Last Words.

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ST. MAT. XXVII. 46.

*“ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani ! that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ”*

WHEN our Blessed Lord, after singing a hymn with His disciples, had betaken Himself to the Garden of Gethsemane, we said to the three, whose privilege it was to be nearest to Him, “ My soul is “exceeding sorrowful even unto death.” All that made up the cup of sorrow then given Him to drink we shall never fully appreciate until we come to know even as we are known. This, however, we can understand, that, having feelings like ourselves, He was keenly alive to pain, whether of body or soul, and naturally shrank from it, just as we should do. What He felt in that dread hour when

He knew that the time was at hand that He, bearing our sins on His Head, should suffer, "the just for the unjust," is more than we can as yet conceive, but we may well believe that there were combined in Him bodily weakness and grief of mind, in such proportions as never before or since were known; the pains of approaching death got hold of Him, and He was bowed down beneath the weight of those sins for which He was to make atonement. The bitterness of that hour is shewn by its effects upon both His Body and His soul: "His sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground;" while such was the agony of His soul that He was constrained to cry out, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me." But so it might not be: nevertheless His prayer was heard, "in that He feared;" "and there appeared an angel unto Him strengthening Him." The load could not be taken from Him, but He had strength given to Him to bear it. This, then, is the secret of that wonderful calmness, dignity, and submission with which He bore in silence, for so long a time, all that the malice of His enemies

could do to Him. "He was oppressed and He "was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth : He "is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a "sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth "not His mouth." No word of complaint escapes Him ; He does but say, " Father, forgive them, for "they know not what they do ;" make answer to the penitent by His side, " To-day shalt thou be "with Me in Paradise ;" anticipate and provide for His mother's desolation, saying, " Woman, Behold "thy son," and to the disciple, whom He loved, " Behold thy mother." But now we must pass on to a deeper mystery than any that we have as yet contemplated in our Lenten meditations. When our Lord had, as we have seen, made intercession for His murderers, hearkened to the prayer of the penitent thief, and made provision for His mother, no more remained whereby His thoughts might be diverted from His own sorrow ; yet even now the torture which His sacred Body was enduring does not elicit a sigh. " The spirit of a man," says Solomon, "will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded "spirit who can bear ?" Others, beside our Lord,

have endured in silence the most exquisite bodily suffering, but there is something far harder to bear than any pains which can touch the body—the grief which enters within the heart and bids it break. What, then, was that grief which at last extorted from our Lord, as He hung upon the Cross, a cry of exceeding anguish? Before we answer this question there is a point which we must first notice. In one respect our Lord differed from all His brethren of mankind; He never had or could have any sense of guilt for personal sin committed; because “in Him there was no sin.” This then was a kind of suffering wholly foreign to His nature. There is no pain which we can endure which comes up to the anguish of a thoroughly awakened conscience. I can never forget how a person who had once lived in the service of God, as far as she understood it, but had afterwards given way to temptation and plunged into the depths of sin, said to me, “No one need speak to me of hell, I have “hell in my own bosom.” Of grief like hers our Lord was not capable, because He had ever a conscience void of offence both toward God and man.

He only could look up and say, without reserve or qualification, "Father, I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." While, however, He had no personal guilt, as bearing the weight of our sins laid on Him, He had to feel the effects of sin in the separation which it makes between a sinner and a Holy God. Sinners, indeed, there are, even the worst of sinners, who seem to have little or no uneasiness, because their conscience being asleep their eyes are holden, while yet the day of reckoning seems far off; happy will it be for them if only before it is too late they are led to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." From such misery then our Lord was exempt, because there never had been a time when He had preferred His own to His Father's will. "I delight to do Thy will, O God," was ever the language of His heart. He only of all the sons of men could say without reserve, "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee." In the very cry which now

escapes Him, He says, "My God, My God." Never then for a moment had His choice wavered: God was the one source to which He looked for joy; but now for a season the consciousness of His Father's sustaining presence was withheld. At His Baptism a voice from Heaven was heard, saying, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased;" in all the hard usage, then, which He received when "He came to His own, and His own received Him not," He was upheld by the sense of His Father's presence and approval. But now, like as the earth was enveloped in darkness, though beyond the clouds that hid it the sun was shining in all its brightness, so the human soul of Him Who hung upon the Cross had the feeling of being shut out from the light of God's countenance. Never, we may be quite sure, was He more the "beloved Son in Whom" His Father was "well pleased," than when He was meekly enduring the penalty due for our sins, because He was at that time fulfilling the promise that "the seed of the woman" should "bruise the serpent's head," and accomplishing all that the victims offered upon



Jewish altars had but foreshadowed, being Himself the Lamb provided by the Father which could alone take away sin. What it was for one Who was Himself infinitely holy to be for even so short a time deprived of that intimate communion with the source of all true joy, which He had hitherto had, is utterly beyond our comprehension. We can only bow our heads and worship Him, Who for our sakes endured such grief, when we hear those words, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Our Lord, as our substitute, was permitted to suffer the effects of sin, if only for a brief season, in the anguish which befell Him while the accumulated sins of all mankind hung as a cloud between Him and His Father, so shutting out the light. Only perfect innocence like His could conceive the pain of such interruption to sensible intercourse between the Father and the Son.

But now, brethren, what lesson may we gather from this scene? There are persons who, having always had vigorous health, abundance of occupation, and no lack of means, have never known anything of the trial of lowness of spirit. Let,

however, sickness overtake them, and days of enforced cessation from their usual employment, and as a consequence scarcity in their households, and then unless they have the consolation of religion and assured faith in God and His good purposes towards them, they will know what it is to be cast down. There are, of course, minds that none of such things can move ; come what will they are found cheerful and content, because they have that inward peace which passeth understanding. They know and are persuaded that “whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth ;” that like as gold and silver are purified in the fire even so the afflictions of the righteous do but serve to remove whatever stains they may have contracted by contact with the world, and therefore they can rejoice in the midst of tribulation, while they put their trust in the Lord. But without such confidence in God and His good providence, such trials are apt to take all the sunshine out of life. For such lowness of spirit there is but one effectual cure, *i.e.*, the turning of the heart to God ; our message to them must be, “Acquaint now

“ thyself with Him, and be at peace : thereby good  
“ shall come unto thee ” Turn from the earth and  
the things of the earth to Him who is above all,  
and you shall find rest for your souls ; this is the  
remedy which God in His own Word has given us  
for such dejection. Hard, however, as such lowness  
of spirit is to bear, which is caused by the failure of  
all earthly comfort, there is something yet more  
distressing to religious people, who have known the  
happiness of intimate communion with God. There  
are times when they find themselves, they know not  
why or wherefore, deprived of the joy which they  
experienced while conscious that the Light of His  
Countenance was shining upon them. This is a  
trial of which careless and ungodly people can have  
no conception : having never sought after or desired  
intimate communion with Him, they know no more  
what it is to lose it than a blind man knows of the  
distinction of colours, or a deaf man of the differ-  
ences of sound. But, however such may be ignorant  
of it, there is what is called a dryness of spirit, a  
coldness and dulness of heart, which is peculiarly  
distressing to those who aforetime have felt the

unspeakable satisfaction of conscious fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. They look into themselves, and know not what they have done to forfeit the loving-kindness of God, and then are tempted, it may be, to doubt whether they ever really were such as He owned. What consolation, then, can we offer them? What but the assurance that theirs is a trial which He, who was without sin, had to bear as He hung upon the Cross, and therefore that it is one which is quite compatible with the reality of God's favour, however the consciousness of it for a time may be withheld. Long before our Lord's experience of it upon the Cross, good men had known what it was to have such grief, and had found out a means of alleviating it. Isaiah had asked "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?" "Let him trust," he says, "in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." The writer of the 77th Psalm had gone through just such a trial, and in his distress had cried out, "Will the Lord absent Himself for ever; and will

“He be no more intreated? Is His mercy clean “gone for ever? Hath God forgotten to be gracious, “and will He shut up His loving-kindness in dis- “pleasure?” No one could have seemed to have been in worse case: but then he discovered the remedy for his soul’s sickness in the remembrance of God’s mercies of old time, and the conviction that it was nothing but his own weakness which made him doubt of God’s continued favour: so he exclaims, “Then I said it is mine own infirmity: “but I will remember the years of the right hand “of the Most Highest. I will remember the works “of the Lord, and call to mind Thy wonders of “old time.” But if God’s Prophets, under the Old Dispensation, could thus comfort themselves in the thought of God and His unchangeableness, how much more may we who know what the sinless One endured upon the Cross, and that He can feel for us with more than a brother’s sympathy whenever we are passing through the deep waters of such spiritual trial. To-night, indeed, we do not reach the close of our Saviour’s sorrow, or see what St. James calls “the end of the Lord; that the

“Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” We may, however, so far anticipate as to say that before His Spirit quitted the Body, the cloud, which only hid for a season the Light of His Father’s Countenance, did pass away, and His soul was satisfied. We can then but conclude with the Apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.” In all such sorrows let your cry be, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” and assuredly He Who heard and answered that exceeding bitter cry from the Cross, will, in like manner, hear and answer your prayer.

## SERMON V.

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### The Seven Last Words.

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ST. JOHN XIX. 28.

*"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst."*

WHEN our Blessed Lord had reached the place where He was to be crucified, we learn from St. Matthew's Gospel, "They gave Him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall: and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink." The object of the draught then presented to Him was probably a merciful one. It was not unusual to give to criminals before crucifixion a stupifying mixture, which would render them insensible in a great measure to the pain which otherwise they must suffer during their prolonged agony. Our Lord, however, had no mind to expiate our sins while Himself unconscious. We know that He had said

“Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay  
“down My life that I might take it again. No  
“man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of My-  
“self. I have power to lay it down, and I have  
“power to take it again.” He would not then  
permit any doubt to be cast upon the freedom of  
His will by allowing His mind to be in the least  
degree clouded while fulfilling His office as our  
great High Priest, and presenting to His Father  
that one offering of Himself, which could alone take  
away sin. In St. Mark’s Gospel we read “And  
“they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh :  
“but He received it not.” Four times, as you have  
heard in our previous meditations, has He spoken  
from the Cross, but as yet His Bodily Suffering has  
drawn from Him no complaint. For a time He  
was too much concerned for others, for those who  
were putting Him to death, for the penitent thief  
by His side, for His bereaved Mother, to dwell  
upon His own sufferings. When, however, He had  
attended to the wants of all these, then was there  
nothing to divert His mind from His own most  
sorrowful condition.” [His wounded Body, even



then, is not His first care. No, as you heard last week, there was a sorrow wherewith His soul was afflicted, which yet for a while rendered Him, it might almost seem, indifferent to the torture which His outward Frame was enduring. As bearing the sins of the whole world which were laid upon Him, He had to endure, at least so far as consciousness was concerned, that separation from God which is the natural effect of sin. Small as such privation may seem to sinners, while yet their minds can be diverted and taken up with other things, very different is it to those who have learned to love God, and have experienced in time past the joy of walking in the light of His countenance. To the holiest of men interruption to their intercourse with the Father of spirits is the most painful of all trials, and yet as sin has more or less cleaved to them in their holiest moments, they could never know the intensity of the happiness which a perfectly holy soul must have in uninterrupted intercourse with the source of all true satisfaction. Such, however, was the soul of Him, Who hung upon the Cross, and yet from Him, though Himself without

stain of sin, His Father hid, as it were, His face : and so being in an agony He cried out, " My God, " My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me." " He " was heard," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, " in that He feared ;" but now instead of, as in the Garden, strength being given to Him to bear it, He was released from that sorrow ; the cloud, which had for a time concealed His Father's Face, was removed, and His soul was again at ease. Oftentimes when the soul is in grief the body is neglected. For example, while his child was sick unto death, and he could not tell whether yet the Lord might be gracious, David could eat no bread, but when all was over, and he had gone into the house of the Lord and worshipped : then he came to his own house : and when he required, they set bread before Him, and he did eat. So when our Lord's spirit was again free, by a natural re-action He became sensible of the part which His sacred Body had to bear ; He said, then, " I thirst." St John tells us, indeed, that He so spake, " that the " Scripture might be fulfilled." We will return to that presently, but first of all we cannot doubt that

what He so said, like everything else which He spake, was a simple truth. What could be more natural, since He was a man like ourselves ! Nothing had passed His lips since He had celebrated His last Supper with His disciples the night before, and now it was well nigh three o'clock on the day of His crucifixion. Not only had He thus been a long time without sustenance of any kind, but in the meanwhile, by reason of the loss of blood which He had undergone, through the sharp thorns piercing His brow, the scourging of His Back, the nails driven through His Hands and His Feet, His thirst could not fail to have become intense. It is said that nothing so aggravates thirst as the flow of blood : it is this which so adds to the sufferings of the wounded on the field of battle : they long for nothing so much as a little water whereby their thirst may be assuaged. Happily we have none of us experienced such misery, and yet there have been times when we have been thankful to have our thirst quenched : what then must have been our Lord's thirst at the end of so many hours of agony and privation ! Long before in the 22nd

Psalm it was thus set forth, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue cleaveth to My gums." The words, then, "I thirst," express something inconceivably beyond anything which we have felt : and yet St. John tells us that our Lord would have borne in silence such bodily anguish, had it not been that He was minded that there should be the most accurate fulfilment of every word of the Scriptures which had foretold the particulars of His Passion. In the 69th Psalm it had been written, "They gave Me gall to eat, and "when I was thirsty they gave Me vinegar to "drink:" He says, then, "I thirst," in order that this prophecy might be fulfilled. Then was given to Him, not "wine," that is "to be given," says Solomon, "unto those that be of heavy hearts," nor yet a cup of cold water, so refreshing to parched lips ;—nothing so welcome as either of these—what answer, then did they, for whom He had made intercession, return to His request? "Now there "was set," says S. John, "a vessel full of vinegar : "and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it "upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth."

But now, brethren, having dwelt upon the first and simplest meaning of the words, "I thirst," and our Lord's care in uttering them that all should be fulfilled, as it had been foretold long before, we may regard these words as having a spiritual application over and above their natural acceptance. In that He was a man, just as once before He had asked water of the woman of Sychar, so now He craved for something that might moisten His parched lips : He was, however, more than perfect Man : He was also perfect God. We may see, then, a meaning in His words which, like everything else which He spake, had a voice for all time. What was it then which He craved for more than for any temporary alleviation of the natural thirst which He was then enduring? What but that His longing desire for the salvation of all men might be satisfied in the looking up to Him of multitudes to the end of the world, that He might redeem them from all iniquity, and fit them to be received into His kingdom ! That thirst it was which caused Him to strip Himself of the glory which He had before the world was made, "to take upon Him the form of

“a servant, and to be made in the likeness of men,  
“and being found in fashion as a man, to humble  
“Himself, and become obedient unto death, even  
“the death of the Cross.”

When, then, He said, “I thirst,” we may well believe that, great as was His longing for a drop of cold water, yet infinitely greater was His desire that His invitation should be accepted, “If any man  
“thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He  
“that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,  
“out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”  
And in that hour, when nothing better than vinegar was given Him to quench the thirst of His parched tongue, His spiritual longing did meet with a better return; long before it had been foretold by the Prophet, “He shall see of the travail of His soul,  
“and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge, “or by  
“the knowledge of Him, shall My righteous servant  
“justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities.”  
All, then, who have lived and died in the faith of Him did in that hour minister to His relief; He saw them, one and all, and was satisfied.

And now, brethren, just a few words of applica-

tion. Should it, then, ever seem good to God that any of us should be afflicted in body, what comfort should the thought of our Lord's bodily pangs minister to us, in the assurance that He, Who so suffered in His own Body on the Tree, can and does sympathize with us : in all such trials of our patience He is still "touched with the feeling of our "infirmities, having been in all points tempted like "as we are." I remember a thoughtful, poor woman, who had to undergo a very painful amputation one Holy week, telling me that it was the greatest consolation to her to think that she should have to submit to such an operation at the very time when we were commemorating our Lord's Passion. It seemed as though it brought Him very near to her, and so helped her to bear it with perfect resignation. Well would it be for us, brethren, if, whenever it may please our Heavenly Father to afflict us, we could with like simple faith realise those words of the Prophet, respecting the troubles of the righteous, "In all their afflictions "He was afflicted." If we could but receive this assurance in all simplicity, then nothing could be

too hard for us to bear. "Yea," we might say with the Psalmist, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me." And next, let us take note of the scrupulous regard, which the sufferer on the Cross had, that every word of Scripture should be fulfilled ; there was one unimportant particular of His Passion, as it might seem, which had been foretold, not yet complete : therefore will He speak the words, " I thirst," to the end that He may receive the vinegar, even as it had been predicted. How ought this, then, to teach us a lesson of reverence for the whole of God's word, and bid us not to pick and choose just what may fall in with our own ideas, but to remember that " all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and so is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness : that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Then only do we treat God's word as we ought to treat it, when we accept implicitly all that it sets before us as a part of the faith once delivered to the saints, and do our utmost



endeavours to practise all the precepts which it teaches us. "If any man will do His will then shall he know of the doctrine whether it be of God," was our Lord's own declaration. Faith and obedience, then, must be inseparable, if Scripture is to be our guide. Last of all, let us not forget that to every one of us is given the opportunity, if we will use it, of ministering to our Lord, as He hangs upon the Cross, something better than the vinegar given Him to drink in answer to His cry, "I thirst;" He has told us what it is that He desires; "My son," He says, "give me thine heart." Whosoever, then, while listening to these meditations upon the words which fell from our Saviour's lips, as He hung upon the Cross, is moved thereby, like the penitent thief, to acknowledge his guilt, and turn to Christ in all sincerity with his petition, "Lord, remember me," contributes to the relief of that greatest of all sufferers. For in that He was God, as well as man, the past, the present, and the future, were all as one to Him; and so in that hour was revealed to Him the sighing of every contrite heart, the quickening of faith in every breast. We then, my

brethren, if we are so minded, may every one of us in this our day give unto Christ, in answer to His cry, "I thirst," what may seem no better than a cup of cold water, but yet that which He will most value, the offering of ourselves, our souls and bodies, that He may dwell in them by His Spirit. Who, then, can deny Him so small a gift? Who shall offer Him instead the sour wine of affections, set upon the world, the flesh, or the devil? Ask yourselves, my brethren, which you ought to give Him who endured such grief for you.

## SERMON VI.

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### The Seven Last Words.

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ST. JOHN XIX. part of the 30th verse.

*"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished."*

THE first three times that our Saviour spake from the Cross He uttered words, which none of us should hope, could have listened to during the weeks of Lent, without being deeply impressed by the strange forgetfulness of self which they betokened, and the no less wonderful compassion which prompted them on behalf of His persecutors: the penitent by His side, His bereaved mother, and the disciple whom He loved, while He Himself was suffering wrongfully. When, however, He had spoken thus tenderly in His pity for others, His thoughts at last were centred upon His own sorrows. Their full extent we can none of us understand. As I have already said, we cannot

conceive the bitterness of that grief which found a vent in the cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The interruption for ever so short a time to the consciousness of His Father's presence, approval, and support, we may well believe, was to Him infinitely harder to bear than perpetual exclusion from the light of God's countenance to one who has not learnt to love Him. This hiding, however, of His Father's Face passed away: but, then, in addition to the other torture which His sacred Body was suffering, the pangs of thirst set in, causing His tongue to cleave to His gums in a way which, as I remarked last week, perhaps only the wounded left on the field of battle could understand. If, then, your hearts, no less than your ears, have been open to receive these things, you cannot but welcome the words which are to engage our attention this evening—"When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished." There have been times most probably in the experience of most of us, when we have had to bear pain; if so, we know something of the relief which followed when the

worst was over. We might almost say that it was worth while to have had the suffering, since without it we should never have known the sweetness of that rest which followed. Even ungodly persons on the near approach of death, when all acute pain has ceased, have felt such relief, that their friends have thought that they had found that inward peace which only belongs to those whose minds are indwelt by the Spirit of God and His promises. What there must have been the joy of Him who knew in very deed that He had now drained to the very dregs that cup of which He had said, "If it may not *pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done;"* that the malice of His enemies and of all the powers of evil had been exhausted, and that there was nothing more which they could do to hurt Him; that while they thought that they had conquered, He had achieved the victory. For now, not only are His sufferings ended, but all is complete just as it had been foretold in type and prophecy from the beginning. Now has "the seed of the woman" bruised "the serpent's head," now has "the blood of sprinkling" been shed

“that speaketh better things than that of Abel ;” now has an only Son, more dearly beloved than even Isaac, been “laid upon the wood ;” now have all nations been blessed in Abraham’s seed ; now has the sacrifice been offered which could indeed take away sin ; now is the scapegoat ready to be sent, bearing the sins of God’s elect, into a “land “not inhabited” by mortal beings ; now is the Blood of the true Paschal Lamb ready to be sprinkled, not to the saving of the first-born of Israel in Egypt, but to the securing of eternal life to “the Church of the first-born which are written in “Heaven ;” for now has been offered not a lamb, which had no choice in the matter, but one who could say of Himself, “Lo, I come ; in the volume “of the Book, it is written of Me, to do Thy will, “O God.” Now is the prophecy fulfilled, “He “shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be “satisfied : by His knowledge shall my righteous “servant justify many ; for He shall bear their “iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion “with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with “the strong ; because He hath poured out His

“soul unto death; and He was numbered with the transgressors.” Thus, then, may we see a three-fold meaning in these words of holy triumph, “It is finished.” First of all, there is an end to all suffering and grief to the “man of sorrows.” Secondly, there is now a complete fulfilment of every minute detail of the one sacrifice for sin, even to the cry, “I thirst,” just as it had been foretold. Last of all, by “one offering,” the victim on the Cross “hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” “It is finished.” Yes, thank God, the sorrows of the perfect man are ended; the one great sacrifice for sin is complete; henceforth the door of Heaven is open to all believers; and so we may have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the Blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say His Flesh,” which now has been rent. Thus, then, before we reach the actual consummation of the sacrifice, which we commemorate to-morrow, our Lenten meditations have led us to anticipate by a few hours the solemn “joy” which was “set before” our Lord, when He

“endured the Cross, despising the shame.”

God grant that our meditations during these weeks may have so prepared us on the morrow to look on Him, Whom our sins have pierced, that we may not be of the number of those thoughtless and unthankful ones, to whom our Lord says in effect if not in word, “Is it nothing to you, all ye  
“that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any  
“sorrow like unto My sorrow, wherewith the Lord  
“hath afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger.”  
God grant that we may now realise the truth, if we have not done so before, that He Who hung upon the Cross was “wounded for our transgressions,” that “He was bruised for our iniquities, that the  
“chastisement of our peace was upon Him,” and that “with His stripes we are healed.” But now, before I conclude, let me add a word of caution. There is no great truth which may not be perverted; and so men, who would make for themselves a royal road to Heaven, which shall smooth their passage there, have mis-interpreted the words, “It  
“is finished,” into a meaning plainly at variance with other portions of God’s Holy Word, viz., that



all that is now needed for their admission into Christ's kingdom in glory is a barren acknowledgment that Christ died for their redemption, while yet they continue the willing servants of sin. This is not what we are told in the 10th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews : there we read, "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that "are sanctified ;" just as in the 12th chapter of the same Epistle we find it written, " Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall "see the Lord ;" and in the 6th chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, " But now being "made free from sin, and become servants of God, "ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end "everlasting life ;" and in the 4th chapter of his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, " This is the will "of God, even your sanctification." But what is sanctification? What but the surrender of the heart and mind, and soul and body to God, to do His will? This was what the penitent thief manifested when rebuking his companion, acknowledging the justice of his own sentence, he turned to Him Who was dying by his side, and said, "Lord,

“remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” Sanctification no doubt was in him imperfect, and might have to be completed in Paradise, whither He was to accompany Him Whom he owned, while nearly all beside were deriding Him. And so sanctification is incomplete in all of us who have need to say day by day, in the words which our Lord has taught us, “Forgive us our trespasses:” just as St. John tells us, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” While, however, God’s most faithful servants have always been the first to own this, their cry has ever been, “Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;” “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.” And so they have ever come, as it were in the press behind Him, to touch if it were but the hem of Christ’s garments, in the Sacraments and Ordinances of His appointment, humbly beseeching their Heavenly Father to “grant that by the merits and death of” His “Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in His Blood,” they “and all” His “whole Church may obtain re-

“mission of their sins and all other benefits of  
“His Passion;” and then have gone on to say,  
“and here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord,  
“our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy, and  
“lively sacrifice unto Thee, humbly beseeching  
“Thee, that all we, who are partakers of this holy  
“communion, may be fulfilled with Thy grace and  
“heavenly benediction.” Would you then, dear  
brethren, have part in Christ’s finished work, seek to  
draw nigh to the altar in this spirit on Easter Day,  
when the Church in her anthem thus invites all her  
faithful children, “Christ our passover is sacrificed  
“for us, therefore let us keep the feast; not with  
“the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and  
“wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of  
“sincerity and truth.” If you cannot so come at  
once, at least give your souls no rest until you can  
come “with a full trust in God’s mercy, and with a  
“quiet conscience.” So only will you learn to know  
what it is to have joy in the Lord, and to rejoice  
before Him with true gladness of heart.

## SERMON VII.

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### The Seven Last Words.

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ST. LUKE XXII. 46.

*" And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit : and having said this, He gave up the ghost."*

SEVEN times did our Lord speak as He hung upon the Cross. From earliest times Christian people have loved to dwell upon the words which so fell from the lips of their dying Master. Suffer me, then, once again to refer to the first six, which we have already considered in our Lenten meditations ; some there are present who have not yet heard them : and they who have attended our Thursday evening services, will not regret, on this great day of the Atonement, to be again reminded of all that our Saviour said, while expiating our sins, by offering unto His Father the one sacrifice which can alone take away sin.

When, then, the soldiers had nailed Him to the Cross, and had set it up that the assembled multitude might see Him, and His enemies thought that they had triumphed, and so passed by, wagging their heads, saying, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save;" then it was that He said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." What better, then, can we do, brethren, than pray that we may be included in that grand act of intercession, that so none of those sins which we have heedlessly committed, may be imputed to us. As an earnest of the power of that prayer of our Lord's, one of the two thieves crucified with Him, who up to that moment had himself taken part in railing at Him, is brought to a better mind; at once he rebukes his companion, acknowledges the justice of his own sentence, and then, while no one else can see any "beauty" that they "should desire Him," is not ashamed to own Him as Lord of all, saying, "Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Then spake our Lord the second time, and said, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." What more can

we desire for ourselves than that, imitating this malefactor's faith and repentance, our souls, when we die, may be received into that same safe resting place, where as yet, with the Father of the faithful, the righteous await the redemption of their bodies and the general resurrection. But He, Who was so tender to His enemies and the penitent by His side, could not be indifferent to the sorrows of the mother who had borne Him. He sees her in anguish gazing at her only Son, Who had done no wrong, thus cruelly being put to death ; He sees too "the disciple standing by, whom He loved ;" pitying then her, and loving him "unto the end," "He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son ; then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother ! and from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." Who, then, can break the fifth commandment, who calls to mind how our Saviour kept it, while bearing our sins upon the Tree ! But now having done all that He could for others, He is oppressed by the sense of His own most bitter anguish. The sins of the whole world having been imputed to Him, for a season

there is withdrawn from Him, not the reality, but the glad consciousness of His Father's loving approval. Darkness has now covered the earth, and a yet deeper darkness has hidden from our Lord the Light of His Father's countenance ; but this is more than even He can endure ; there bursts, then, from Him that exceeding bitter cry, " My God, My God, " why hast Thou forsaken Me ? " Who of us, then, brethren, if ever we are a prey to spiritual desolation, may not find comfort in the thought that we are but overshadowed by the fringe of that dark cloud, which for awhile came between the innocent Son of God and the Father, Whose least commandment He had never broken ! There is an end, however, to that grief ; but now, after the long hours, during which He had had no sustenance, and the loss of blood caused by the sharp thorns which had pierced His brow, the scourging which had " made long furrows " upon His " back," and the nails by which His Hands and His Feet were transfixed, the anguish of His sacred Body is aggravated by the intense thirst by which He is assailed. He says, therefore, " I thirst." This,

however, He would not have said, St. John tells us, had it not been for His anxiety that the Scriptures should be fulfilled. It had been foretold in the 69th Psalm, "I looked for some to have pity on Me, but there was no man, neither found I any to comfort Me. They gave Me gall to eat, and when I was thirsty, they gave Me vinegar to drink." He spake, then, because He would not that one jot or one tittle of His Father's Word should seem to fail. May we not, then, in our weaknesses, infirmities, and sufferings of body, find solace in the assurance that in all our afflictions He is afflicted, having been in all points tempted like as we are! When we see His scrupulous regard that every single detail of His Passion, foretold in Holy Scripture, should be fulfilled, shall any of us presume to say that this or that is unimportant, and not rather remember that "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." But over and above their natural meaning, the words "I thirst" have been believed to have a spiritual application, and to have expressed the earnest desire, which our Lord had, that men



would accept that free salvation which He was dying to procure for them. Every one, then, who does turn and look on Him, Whom their sins have pierced, with the resolve henceforth to live for Him, offers Him as He hangs upon the Cross, not the vinegar which was put to His parched lips, but that very draught which He longed for. And now, last night, we dwelt upon the fulness of the relief with which, when all His sufferings of mind and body were over, He could say, "It is finished." All pain and sorrow were at an end ; type and prophecy had been fulfilled ; the price of man's redemption had been paid to the uttermost farthing ; and so all sin that is now repented of, confessed and forsaken, is forgiven, and we may " enter into the holiest by " the Blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, " which He hath consecrated for us, through the " veil, that is to say, His Flesh." Our natural life is sustained by the bread which we receive in answer to our prayer, " Give us this day our daily bread : " the life of our souls by that Bread which came down from Heaven ; what can we then say but " Lord, " evermore give us this Bread," and then most

thankfully receive it at our Father's Table ! And now, at length, we reach the final word, "And "when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, "Father, into Thy Hands I commend My spirit : "and having said this, He gave up the Ghost." It rested with Him to die whensoever He might see fit. He had said, "Therefore doth My Father love "Me, because I lay down My life, that I might "take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I "lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it "down, and I have power to take it again." It is said that not unfrequently persons, who have been crucified, have lingered until the third day, before death has put an end to their sufferings. Our Lord's enemies knew this, "the Jews therefore, because it "was the preparation, that the bodies should not "remain upon the Cross on the Sabbath day (for "that Sabbath day was an high day), besought "Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that "they might be taken away." Foreseeing this, our Lord determined to anticipate the soldiers' violence, and to render it unnecessary in His case, in order that one other type might be fulfilled. When the

Feast of the Passover was instituted it had been expressly said, "Thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house ; *neither shall ye break a bone thereof.*" For fifteen hundred years this rule had been observed in every Jewish household ; therefore no bone must be broken in Him Who was prefigured by the Paschal Lamb. For this cause, then, our Lord chose not to continue longer, but while both His fellow-sufferers were yet living, He resolves to die. To shew, however, that had He so willed, He might yet have remained alive, He did that which we never find any dying of exhaustion to do, He "cried with a loud voice," and then said, "Father, into Thy Hands I commend My spirit." St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, all mention, as though it was something extraordinary, this loud cry as uttered by our Lord before He gave up the ghost. By this, then, He manifested the perfect freedom of His will, and shewed that the separation of His Soul and Body were properly His own act and deed. How long before this the sense of His Father's loving approval had returned to Him, we are not told ; but how

completely He had recovered it may be seen in the perfect confidence with which He commits His soul into His Father's keeping. We know, it may be, something of the joy of pure earthly attachments, and the happiness of renewed intercourse with those whom we love, when anything has occurred to interrupt it; faint, however, as such a shadow must be, it is the only one which we can as yet conceive of the joy of the restoration of that perfect harmony, which had indeed always existed in reality, but was now again realised between the Father and the Son. What a death, then, was this to die! for a perfectly holy soul to pass from the agony and the shame which it had endured in the body to the Paradise of God! "There the wicked  
"cease from troubling, and there the weary be at  
"rest." Can there be a hope of such a departure for any of us? "To-day shalt thou be with Me in  
"Paradise," said our Lord to the penitent by His side. Such was the promise made to one who had been a grievous sinner; and if sincere penitents may have such assurance, much more may all who have served God continually, and never wilfully

gone astray from that good home, in which He placed them when He received them into His family, as members of His Son. How beautifully does Solomon speak of what death is to the righteous, "Through envy of the devil," he says, "came death into the world ; and they that do hold of his side do find it. But the souls of the righteous are in the Hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die ; and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction ; but they are in peace. For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality. And having been a little chastised, they shall be greatly rewarded : for God proved them, and found them worthy for Himself. As gold in the furnace hath He tried them, and received them as a burnt offering." If, then, we have gone astray from the path of God's commandments, and can be brought by "the gentleness of Christ" to see our sin, to own our faults, and to look to Him in unfeigned faith, the same Paradise is open to us that was promised to

the thief upon the Cross ; if, better still, by the grace of God, " by patient continuance in well-doing," we " seek for glory and honour and "immortality," " eternal life " is promised to us when God shall " render unto every man according to his deeds ;" and, not only so, but immediate rest and peace, while yet the soul awaits the redemption of the body, for " Blessed are the dead which " die in the Lord from henceforth : yea, saith the " Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and " their works do follow them."

Thus, then, my brethren, have we reached the close of our meditations upon the Seven Sayings of our Lord, spoken from His Cross. God grant that the words which He then spake, may often be in our minds ! Let us weigh them over, and learn from them both how to live and how to die. Let them teach us to think and see how we may do good to all within our reach, especially to those of our own household, rather than to dwell upon our own troubles ; to value, above all things, intimate communion with God, even our Father ; to call upon Him in our darkest hours ; to have respect to

every portion of His Word ; thankfully to acknowledge His goodness when He is pleased to lighten or end our trials ; and when we die, calmly to commit our souls to Him, in perfect assurance that He will receive them, if we ask Him in the Name of Him Who first said, " Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit ;" and, having said this, gave up the ghost.













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